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AUTHOR Carter, Linda P.
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses narrative as a culturally significant speech genre which can be analyzed to reveal important aspects of a culture's code, particularly its expectations for conduct. The paper argues that through an analysis of narratives an understanding of one important aspect of a culture's code, specifically, that aspect which deals with a community's expectations for conduct (its social/cultural norms) can be developed. The paper begins by discussing cultural norms, and the form and significant cultural content of narratives. It then presents an analytical framework which has been developed to infer cultural norms through the interpretation of mythic narratives (which are shown to be culturally powerful stories). Finally, the paper applies this framework to the interpretation of a cultural text to illustrate the utility of this method. (Forty-two references are attached.) (RAE)

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Understanding a Society through its Stories:
The Development and Application of an Approach for
Discovering Norms through Analysis of Narratives

Linda P. Carter

Department of Speech Communication
University of Washington, Seattle

Home address:
9979 Good Luck Road, #103
Seabrook, Maryland 20706

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This paper argues that a narrative analysis can be
conducted in order to discover or infer the norms of
a community. It presents an analytical framework
which has been developed to infer norms through the
interpretation of mythic narratives, and it illustrates
the utility of this method by applying the framework
to the interpretation of a cultural text.

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In theme, if not in every detail, narrative is meaningful for persons in particular and in general, across communities as well as cultures, across time and space.

Fisher, Human Communication as Narration

This paper is about narratives, about their importance to the scholar of culture and communication. As Fisher's quote testifies to, narratives are cultural productions; they are meaningful because the source of their content is a culture's "knowledge" or "code". Hymes (1981) lends support to this statement, when he states that what "survives" in the telling of stories is largely material that continues to be relevant to the ethos of a community, to its moral and psychological concerns. These concerns are at the core of a culture's "code"; they involve matters of identity and values, of roots and aspirations.

The central point which is being made is that the narrative can be viewed as a speech genre which is "culturally significant"; narratives have important cultural content "poured" into their form. The goal of this paper is to show that, through an analysis of narratives, the investigator can develop an understanding of one important aspect of a culture's code, specifically, that aspect which deals with a community's expectations for conduct, its social/cultural norms. In making the argument that narratives can be analyzed in order to discover or infer the norms of a community, this paper begins by discussing norms, and discussing the form and significant cultural content of narratives. It then presents an analytical

framework which has been developed to infer norms through the interpretation of mythic narratives (which will be shown to be culturally "powerful" stories). Lastly, this paper applies the framework to the interpretation of a cultural text, to illustrate the utility of this method.

Cultural/Social norms

The concept "norm" is often seen as fundamental to those studying communication and behavior. Norms are used to explain both instances and patterns of communicative conduct, such as explaining why an individual acted as s/he did, or why patterns of communicative choice are found in a particular group or society. In these situations, the patterns or regularities are explained in reference to the norm which guides such conduct. By their usual definition, norms are considered to be cultural, and to be transmitted through a process of social interaction. For example, Philipsen (1986) defines norms as rules specifying a class of interpersonal conduct, for a class of situations, which have legitimacy or force in a given community or group.

The analyst discovers or identifies norms in an attempt to understand the cultural behavior of a community. This general category of "cultural conduct", as Hymes (1981) notes, includes behavior which is under the aegis of social norms, cultural rules and shared principles of interpretability. "Cultural conduct" is conceptually linked with what Farrell (1976, 1978) calls "social knowledge". He says that, "social knowledge comprises conceptions of symbolic relationships among problems, persons, interests, and actions, which imply (when accepted) certain

notions of preferable public behavior" (1976, p. 4). This knowledge implies a covert imperative for choice and action; it carries a normative force. What underlies social/cultural knowledge is a need for a kind of regularity, a similar way of understanding and acting in a social group or community. The manifest form of social/cultural knowledge is normative statements, which are available to members of the culture, and observers of the culture, including analysts.

How is the analyst to proceed in the quest to discover or infer the norms of a particular culture? Stated otherwise, how can an observer learn the expectations for conduct which have force in a particular social field? Many investigators believe that one should conduct a direct analysis of spontaneous speech data. In this approach, the investigator audits the speech of a community, and, by using a systematic method, "reads" a communal text, thereby learning some of the norms which are a part of the social knowledge of that communal group. As will be shown, one particular genre of "communal text" which is available for analysis and interpretation, and which can be revelatory of cultural norms, is the narrative.

Narratives: Form and Content

This section will begin with a discussion of narrative form, and then move to a discussion of the cultural "content" which fills this form. According to Hymes (1975), narrative uses of language are universal. He states that "it is clear that connected 'relatings' and 'replayings' of experience are a frequent and fundamental form of syntactic organization" (p.

349). All cultural groups (in Hymes' terms, "language-using" groups) have and use a narrative form of interaction.

But what is meant by the term "form"? Burke (1968) states that form, in literature, is an arousing and fulfillment of desires. A work has form in so far as one part of it leads a reader to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence. Interestingly, a specific type of form which Burke discusses is "conventional" form, which he defines as involving the appeal of form as form. His examples of conventional form include works with distinct senses of introduction and clear endings, such as this short Mother Goose piece, which has a "pure" beginning and a "pure" end:

"I'll tell you a story of Jack O'Neary
And now my story's begun;
I'll tell you another about his brother
And now my story is done." (p. 126)

Through use of this example, Burke makes an explicit reference to story or narrative as an type of "conventional" form.

Burke's idea of narrative as form can be supported by Ivie and Ayres' (1978) discussion of powerful or meaningful form. As they state, a meaningful form is a recognizable sequence in which one verbal entity generates an expectation for, and leads to the production of, a consequent entity or class of entities. The narrative form is so recognized and utilized by people in their communicative interactions.

But this "form" is not filled with just any content. The narrative form is used to express social/cultural meanings. As

Bauman (1986) states, "Symbolic forms (such as narratives) have their primary existence in the action of people and their roots in social and cultural life" (p. 2). This belief is expressed even more firmly by Polanyi (1979), who states, "What stories can really be about is, to a very significant extent, culturally constrained: stories... can have as their point only culturally salient material generally agreed upon by members of the producer's culture to be self-evidently important and true" (p. 207).

What kinds of "culturally salient material" can be found in narratives? One specific way in which the narrative form is culturally used (or "filled") is in explaining one's behavior to members of one's society. Burke (1954), in discussing this type of interaction, says, when we see a man explaining his conduct by the favored terms of his social code, we may say that he is making exactly the same kind of rationalization as when he, having lived among psycho-analysts, begins discussing his interests solely in terms of libido, repression, Oedipus complex, and the like. Burke's point is that all societies have rules of conduct and a terminology of motives to go with them. When individuals introspect to find the explanations for their attitudes, they naturally employ the verbalizations of their group. Individuals simply interpret with the only vocabulary they know. In doing so, they are stating their orientation, which involves a vocabulary of ought and ought-not, with an attendant vocabulary of praise-worthy and blameworthy. This language reveals a society's code for conduct, the operative norms, and

the norms/rules can specifically be found in the reasons which are employed in storytelling, as one recounts an experience or event.

This idea of using the narrative form both to "recount" and to "account for" events is taken up by Fisher (1987). He states:

"Recounting and accounting for constitute stories we tell ourselves and each other to establish a meaningful life-world... The character of the narrator(s), the conflicts, the resolutions, and the styles will vary, but each mode of recounting and accounting for is but a way of relating a 'truth' about the human condition." (p. 62)

The discussion, thus far, has shown that the analyst can look to narratives for both a "replaying/relating/recounting" of experience, and an "accounting/explanation/rationalization" of experience. In doing so, the analyst begins to gain insight into a society's rules or code of conduct.

Additional insight on the "cultural content" of narratives is found in Haviland's (1979) discussion of gossip. He begins by stating that the study of gossip can reveal how native actors examine, use and manipulate cultural rules in natural contexts, because gossip dwells on those features of behavior which call cultural rules into play- those items of information that enable people to make evaluations. In support of his statement, Haviland quotes Parsons (1936, p. 387), who says that, by recounting gossip, she can give an appreciation of "...what they (the native actors) are willing to talk about, and what they keep

to themselves; the kind of behavior they condemn or are indifferent about..." (p. 6). It is the narrative form which is used to convey this important cultural information; people "gossip" through stories which they tell about themselves and others.

In Haviland, one can also find a contribution to the belief that narrative content provides a "recounting of" and an "accounting for" experience. In making his argument, Haviland quotes from Bailey (1971, pp. 284-85):

"An event or an action is public not only to those who see it, but also to those who hear it.

Indeed, it is speech which defines the nature of that event: the moral evaluation, which is what matters, is of its very nature unseeable. Comment relates event and action to the 'eternal verities' (egoism, equality, and so on) and just as these abstract qualities are invisible, so are the events which are judged in their light." (p. 10)

Haviland uses Bailey's statement to argue that gossip not only supplies the raw "description" of certain events, but rather an account of events, with interpretation and often evaluation attached. It is clear, then, that talk such as this would be presented in narrative form, in the recounting of, and giving an account of, an event. An analyst, in going to narratives such as these (whether they are explicitly a part of "gossip" or are a part of other social interactions), will find content which

involves talk about cultural rules, and especially talk which evaluates behavior on the basis of cultural rules.

Other authors have discussed the significant cultural content which can be found in the narrative form. For example, Abrahams (1970) makes the point that one can tell a great deal about the values of a group from its stories, because they reveal what actions are approved and what are not. He says that certain acts in any group's stories will provide cues which tell them whether a character is admirable and represents the group's highest values, or whether he is to be laughed at or scorned.

It has been shown that the narrative form is a pervasive and frequently used way to organize experience; and that it contains (is "filled" with) culturally specific content, including material about a cultural group's values, rules and norms. In the next section of this paper, the discussion will focus on a particular narrative genre which will be shown to be especially revelatory of normative content. This is the mythic narrative.

Mythic Narratives

A mythic narrative can be generally defined as a "powerful" or "strong" cultural story, because it's content involves taking a problem and showing a figure/character responding to it with a powerful resource. As Philipsen (1986) states, a myth is a story that takes some problem that a kind of person (with certain role qualities) responds to with some resource or tool. Philipsen (n.d.) also notes that myths have heuristic value to the "student" of a culture, because, by listening to and interpreting a society's myths, the student can learn what meanings, motives

and story lines are intelligible and persuasive in it. More specifically, a myth can reveal cultural values, by showing what can be talked about, what are "problems" in a culture, and what are "resources" which can be used to respond to a problem. The essential content of mythic narratives is cultural categories (persons, actions, resources, etc.) which are linked together in meaningful relationships; the analysis of these relationships can provide insight into the preferred/accepted norms for actors and actions, that is, how they should be linked.¹

Hallowell (1947) makes an important point about the valuable insight which can be gained by interpreting/analyzing the content of myths. He believes that myths provide clues to latent attitudes, values and notions that the people themselves may not be aware of, and do not, or cannot, articulate in any other form. Myths may express meanings that the native cannot easily translate into other forms of speech- yet such meanings may be intelligible to him intuitively and are of psychological importance to him. Hallowell states that the analyst must be able to "look behind the scenes" of the dramatic action (in the myth) in order to discern what is both culturally significant and relevant to the people.

The idea that mythic narratives contain "cultural meanings" which are intuitively intelligible and psychologically important is supported in Hannerz's (1969) discussion of myth. He states that myths are intellectual phenomena by way of which men reflect on their condition; on myths men ground their beliefs about what moves them and their world. In talking about ghetto men's

narratives as mythmaking, Hannerz notes that, "when added together", they "may give the understanding of forces transcending the fate of any particular man, because these forces are the same regardless of who happens to be the narrator and temporary incumbent of that eternal protagonist's position which we have referred to as Ghetto Man" (p. 116). He further notes that myths are not only instruments of reflection, since,

"once intellectual dilemmas arising from past experiences can be regarded as resolved- for the moment at least- myth faces the other way, toward the future. It is programmatic ... It has been seen as a charter for social action". (p. 116)

Hannerz closes his discussion of myth by quoting from Kluckhohn (1942): "Every culture has a type conflict and a type solution", and we can see in mythology "a storehouse of supra-individual type solutions" (p. 117).²

This discussion of mythic narratives shows that one should look to the narrative form to find cultural content, and should look particularly to mythic narratives, because of their use of evaluative terms to link key cultural categories (such as problems and solutions, actors and actions). In doing so, they provide "candidates" for the norms of a cultural group; they are a place where it is possible to discover or infer the community's ground rules for conduct.

Analytical Framework

What method can be used to interpret the normative content of mythic narratives? The method proposed in this paper consists

of three levels of analysis: (1) An analysis of the speech event, (2) An analysis of the speech act, that is, the specific content of the mythic narrative, and (3) An analysis of the evaluation of the participants in the speech event to the content of the mythic narrative.

It is important to note here why the analytical framework makes a differentiation between the speech "event" and the speech "act". Hymes (1972), in describing these concepts, uses the example of a party. Within the context/situation of a party (a speech situation), there may be many different speech events, such as a conversation; and within this conversation, there may be many different speech acts, such as the telling of a joke. Therefore, the analyst needs to focus on both the events and the acts which make up these events.

As related to the telling of stories, this differentiation between speech event and speech act is particularly significant. Bauman (1986) discusses the analytical distinction between "narrative events" and "narrated events". He states, "Narratives are keyed both to the events in which they are told (the narrative event) and to the events that they recount (the narrated event)" (p. 2).³ Georges (1969) makes a similar argument, stating that the "text" (that is, the narrative itself) constitutes nothing more than one aspect of the message of a complex communicative event, which he refers to as a "storytelling event". As he explains:

"Storytelling events, like all distinguishable events within continua of communication, have many

different and interrelated aspects, all of which contribute to and are at the same time part of the whole event... No single aspect of a storytelling event can be regarded universally as primary or dominant, and no one aspect can be studied without considering its interrelationships with the other aspects taken as a whole." (p. 316)

Therefore, the analyst must focus on what makes up the narrative/story (the speech act or "narrated event"), but must also take into consideration the "storytelling/narrative" event, that is, the event in which the story is told.

The analysis of the speech event involves a description of the key aspects of the event in which the mythic narrative was told. The framework which will be used for this analysis was developed by Hymes (1972). He outlines eight components of a speech event which should be described and analyzed: the physical setting and psychological scene; the participants; the ends (purposes, outcomes, goals); the act sequence (message form and content); the key (tone, manner, spirit); the instrumentalities (channels and forms of speech); the norms of interaction and interpretation; and the genre.

The analysis of the speech act involves description of four aspects of the mythic narrative: The point, function, context and evaluation. As will be seen, while some of these are conceptually similar to components of the speech event, others are unique to the analysis of narrative texts.

The first aspect to describe is the "point" or essential meaning of the mythic narrative, what message or meaning is being conveyed in mythic form. As was previously stated, there are constraints on narrators to make their "point" be about culturally salient material, and to reflect in some way the culture's values or rules/norms. This aspect of the analysis focuses on what the story is about, what the point of the myth seems to be. While this is conceptually similar to one part of the "act sequence" of the speech event (i.e. the message "content"), they are analytically distinct, as one involves describing more generally what is said in the entire event, and the other focuses on what is specifically "said" in the narrative.

The "function" or purpose of the mythic narrative, why it is being told, is the second aspect to describe. Again, while this is conceptually similar to the "ends" of the speech event, there is an important analytical distinction between the two. The purpose for telling a story may be different from the "ends" or purpose of an event as a whole. For example, the goal of an interaction or event may be to be sociable, but the purpose or function of a specific mythic narrative told during that event may be to resolve a conflict or to clarify an issue. Thus, there are general ends of events and specific ends of speech acts within events. At this level, the analyst is interested in describing the purpose served by telling the mythic narrative.

The third aspect to describe is the "context" of the mythic narrative, which includes the participants and the settings

[time(s) and place(s)] within the narrated event. As can be readily observed, this level of "context" differs from the setting and participants which are described at the level of the speech event. A description of the context is relevant to both the narrative event and the narrated event; It is important to describe who tells the story, to whom, and when and where it is told, and equally important to describe who is in the story, and when and where the story takes place (or took place).

Lastly, the analyst describes the "evaluation", which is the attitude of the participants within the mythic narrative toward the events, in general, and their behavior, in particular.⁴ By "listening" to the content of the myth, the audience (and analyst) learn about the social actors' problems and actions, as well as learning how they felt, and how they evaluated their own behavior. Through this analysis, insight is gained into what is seen by the social actors to be praiseworthy and/or blameworthy, and what norms/rules are appealed to by the actors in making their evaluations.

This paper also proposes a third level of analysis: a description of how the participants in the speech event evaluate the content of the mythic narrative. The focus here is on the evaluation which is made by the storyteller and by the auditors/audience. This is conceptually similar to the "evaluation" which is made by the participants/actors within the narrative itself. Yet it is important to include the reactions of the teller and the audience to the story, particularly their

attitudes toward the events and toward the behavior of the actors.

One reason for the importance of including this aspect is that, if a story is to become "powerful" in a culture, cultural members must take it up, telling it and sharing it; by doing so, they show it's importance and it's status as a "cultural story". Philipsen (1986) has stated that such a cultural story (1) is intelligible to the people who hear it- it makes sense; (2) is widely distributed- it makes sense to a large group; and (3) is reoccurring- people use it. When narrators tell a cultural story, specifically a cultural myth, they include their reaction/response to the story, specifically, their evaluation of the actors and events, and their evaluation of the rules/norms which were appealed to within the story. To say, as narrator, that one agrees with an action, is to say that one acknowledges and accepts the societal norms on which it was based. Conversely, in saying that one disagrees with an action, a narrator is saying that s/he rejects or disapproves of the norms on which it was based. For the same reason, the analyst needs to consider how the auditors of the story evaluate it. They, too, will be making statements about their acceptance or rejection of the societal norms contained in the myth.

The method for inferring or discovering norms through a tri-level analysis of mythic narratives will now be applied to an actual cultural text. The goal of this analysis is to provide an illustration of how the methodology can be used, and what normative content it can reveal. Again, the analyst is looking

for possible candidates for the norms of a cultural group, and is focusing on mythic narratives because of their potential for containing insight into a community's ground rules for conduct.

The Cultural Text

The particular cultural text which will be analyzed is an episode from a film by Frederick Wiseman titled High School. This film is a 1968 documentary about Northeast High School, which is located in a Philadelphia middle-class community. Much has been written about Wiseman and his documentaries (which are primarily about American institutions),⁵ including two works which study the rhetorical structure and content of this film (Gronbeck, 1978; Benson, 1980).⁶ Both authors note that Wiseman uses the documentary filmmaking style called "cinema verite", which attempts to create a sense that the audience is observing naturally occurring behavior. In cinema verite, "there are no actors, no special lights, no enormous film crews" (Benson, p. 259). Gronbeck uses the term "report" to describe this documentary style, because:

"the camera presumably merely records action taking place in front of it"... it captures "natural sounds, everyday incidents"... has "long takes with relatively few edits, minimal zooming, occasional swish pans to capture reaction shots"... all of which "create the feeling that the viewer is watching unrehearsed events"... it is "the least cinematic form of documentary and creates a sense of honesty and directness,

apparently controlled as it is by the subjects and not the filmmakers." (p.146)

As with all documentary films, Wiseman (as director) made editing choices which led to the final form in which the actions and incidents are presented. In the case of *High School*, Wiseman edited twenty-two days of in-school shooting into a 74.5 minute product.⁷ Benson (1980) identifies forty-three distinct episodes (in his terms "sequences") which comprise the content of the film. The episode which is the subject of this analysis is the final "sequence" of the film; it involves a speech which is made by the school principal to a large audience of teachers, members of the "school community".⁸ As will be seen, this speech consists primarily of a mythic narrative in which normative content is expressed.

A transcript of the episode is presented below. Several points about the transcript need to be made. First, descriptions of pertinent non-verbal actions of the speaker are contained in parentheses. Second, the speaker is reading a letter written by another individual, and that portion of the speech which is the letter is set off by quotations marks. At times, the speaker interjects comments during the reading of the letter, and these interjections are separated from the content of the letter by appearing in brackets.

Third, the speech has been organized into lines and groups of lines, following the model proposed by Hymes (1981, 1984, 1985). He has attempted to "liberate" narrative texts from the sentence and paragraph format which is generally used by

collectors of stories. He believes that one can get more "depth of meaning" by looking for patterns of internal ("local") relations and by using numbering, indentation, and spacing (between groups of lines) to identity units of "surface" structure and "content" structure. In adapting Hymes' ideas to this narrative text, the author has attempted to present the lines in a way which reveals the speaker's natural pacing/phrasing and which segments the content into coherent units, such as actions and episodes.

1 Now let me read you this one,
2 if I'm able to get through it. (Long Pause)

3 This is written from,
4 and I might say,
5 that the letter I'm about to read,
6 is from Bob Walters.
7 Bob Walters,
8 as Fran could tell you, (Head nods towards someone)
9 if she could write his biography,
10 was a boy without parents,
11 who might have been a nobody.
12 He certainly was not a high academic student.
13 He was most average or subaverage in many ways.
14 But a few teachers who cared
15 made a great difference in this boy's life.

16 His letter comes on stationery marked USS Okinawa.

17 I hope I can get through it,
18 if I don't, Hy,
19 you'll have to go on.

20 "Dear Doctor Haller:

21 I have only a few hours before I go.
22 Today I will take a plane trip from this ship.
23 I pray that I'll make it back.
24 But it is all in God's hands now.
25 You see, I am going with three other men.
26 We're going to be dropped behind the DMZ,
27 the demilitarized zone.

28 The reason for telling you this is,
29 that all my insurance money
30 will be given for that scholarship

31 I once started
32 but never finished,
33 if I don't make it back.
34 I am only insured for ten thousand dollars.
35 Maybe it could help someone.

36 I have been trying to become a Big Brother in Vietnam,
37 but it is very hard to do.
38 I have to write back and forth to San Diego, California,
39 and that takes time.
40 I only hope that I am good enough to become one.
41 God only knows.

42 I really pray that the young men in your cooking classes
43 will use this change of learning very well.
44 Thank you Doctor Haller
45 for helping these men
46 become good very fine cooks.
47 [He should have said thank you Mrs. C.]

48 My personal family usually doesn't understand me.
49 They don't see,
50 they don't understand
51 why I have to do what I do do.
52 They say that I'm a real nut to do such work,
52 but ... (Turns page)
53 Thus they say,
54 don't you value life?
55 Are you crazy?
56 My answer is yes,
57 but I value all the lives of South Vietnam
58 and the free world,
59 so that they
60 and all of us
61 can live in peace.

62 Am I wrong Doctor Haller?
63 If I do my best all the time
64 and believe in what I do,
65 believe that what I do is right,
66 that is all I can do.

67 Doctor Haller,
68 if anything happens to me,
69 J.C. Heckswicker [I think it is]
70 will send you a telegram
71 and in time he will send you the money.

72 Please don't say anything to Mrs. C,
73 [But I did]
74 she would only worry over me.
75 I am not worth it.
76 I am only a body doing a job.

77 In closing
 78 I thank everyone
 79 for what they all have done for me.

 80 Yours truly,
 81 Bob Walters

 82 Thank you all again very much.

 83 Please forgive my handwriting.
 84 I am a little jumpy.
 85 Please understand."

 86 Now when you get a letter like this,
 87 to me it means,
 88 that we are very successful
 89 at Northeast High School
 90 and I think you will agree with me.

Interpretation of the Text

Interpretation of this text begins with the first level of the analytical framework, description of the key aspects of the speech event. The event takes place in a high school auditorium; there are many rows of seats for audience members, and the speaker stands on a stage, behind a podium/lectern. The only time referent which is given (or available) is the year, which is 1968. There are no more specific referents to the time, such as day of the week or time of day. The psychological scene can be described as formal or "businesslike".

The speaker is Dr. Haller, who seems to have a position of authority in this group. [Benson (1980) refers to her as the school principal]. She is referred to by her title ("Doctor"), and she addresses others as "Hy", "Fran" and "Mrs. C", using more informal terms of address for them. The auditors consist of members of the school's faculty. They are sitting in the auditorium seats, listening to her, and several of them are

specifically recognizable from earlier episodes in the film as teachers.

Dr. Haller's purpose in this event is to read a letter she has recently received from a former student of the school. Based upon statements she makes in her speech, her goal seems to be to show that "a few teachers who cared made a great difference in this boy's life", and that "we are very successful at Northeast High School." One could call this a pep-rally speech, with the goal of inspiring, as well as reinforcing attitudes and commitment to the school and their roles in the system.

The description of the act sequence of the event will be facilitated by referencing the corresponding line numbers of the text. The speaker begins by stating that she will read a letter (1-2), tells who it is from (3-6), gives background information on the writer (7-15), and conveys an emotional tone about the letter ("I hope I can get through it"; lines 17-19). She then begins reading the letter. Bob Walters starts by telling his circumstances/situation (about to be dropped behind the DMZ; lines 21-27), tells why he is giving this information (the insurance money-scholarship; lines 28-35), and reports on the other "good" thing he is trying to do (be a Big Brother; lines 36-41). He also mentions the students in the cooking class (42-47). Bob then discusses how his family feels about his situation (48-55), and how he responds to their questions (56-61); this leads to a statement of his beliefs and his reasons for his actions (62-66). He tells Dr. Haller how she will get the money (67-71), and states that others shouldn't know about his actions,

and shouldn't worry about him (72-76). Bob closes his letter by thanking them for what they've done for him (77-79, and line 82), and apologizes for being "jumpy" (83-85). Dr. Haller finishes by stating what the letter "means" to her, and stating her belief that her audience will agree with her (86-90).

As noted, the key of the event is very serious and formal, and there is an overtone of emotionality as well. Twice in her opening, Dr. Haller makes what Bauman (1977) would call a "disclaimer of performance", where a speaker begins or announces a performance with a surface denial of competence to perform. This type of "opening message" carries with it instructions on how to interpret the other messages about to be communicated. Dr. Haller's disclaimers ["Now let me read you this one, if I'm able to get through it" (lines 1-2); "I hope I can get through it, if I don't, Hy, you'll have to go on" (lines 17-19)] convey to her audience that this is to be seen as an "important" letter, and it is to "move" her audience's feelings, as it has moved hers.

As to the instrumentalities, besides speaking in Standard English, Dr. Haller speaks in a very formal manner. She articulates distinctly and slowly works her way through the sounds. For example, she does not use contractions, such as "I'm", but says "I am...". From Dr. Haller's reading of the letter, the audience/auditor can get a sense of the level of formality which was used by Bob Walters in his writing of the letter; it is clear that Dr. Haller adds to the seriousness and

emotion by holding on to the sounds and pausing purposefully, not rushing through or using a more conversational/casual pace.

The norms of interaction for this event are based on the definition of the situation, which is that Dr. Haller is a speaker making a presentation to an audience. The situation can be classified as a public speech or a single-speaker situation. The norms for this type of interaction are that there is no turn-taking, that the speaker has the floor until s/he signals completion of the event. The auditors do not have the right to verbally interrupt or otherwise interject their reactions or responses. They are expected to listen and be silent participants.

The norms of interpretation for this event are that the listeners/auditors should interpret Dr. Haller's speech as an important and serious message, which is being directly made to them, as teachers of Northeast High School, by a person of some authority within their school community.

The genre of the event, as noted above, can be classified as a "single-speaker presentation" or the "public reading of a letter". For the purpose of this analysis, the specific type of discourse which is of interest within this event is the telling of a narrative, specifically a mythic narrative.

This leads to the second level of analysis, the specific content of the mythic narrative. The first aspect is the "point" or essential meaning/message of the story. In essence, what this story is about is how a "nobody" becomes a "somebody". Bob Walters had a "problem", he was without parents, without high

academic ability. To quote Dr. Haller: "He was most average or subaverage in many ways" (line 13). But he solved his problem by responding to it with what are culturally valued resources and tools. These include: Offering to financially help other students (by using his insurance money for a scholarship); Trying to help young children (by becoming a Big Brother); Acknowledging the help given to him by others (his instructors) and thanking them for their help; Trying to "help" South Vietnam and the free world live in peace (by fighting in the war); Believing that he should do his best all the time, should believe in what he does, should believe that what he does is right- that this is "all he can do"; Believing that he should not be worried over, that he is not worth it, because he is "only a body doing a job". He also makes several references to a belief in God and the power of prayer ("I pray that I'll make it back. But it is all in God's hands now"- lines 23-24; "God only knows"- line 41; "I really pray..."- line 42).

The cultural resources which this social actor uses to solve his problem of personhood are a combination of culturally preferred actions and beliefs- what he can/should do, and what he can/should believe and feel in order to be a "somebody", a successful cultural member. What is revealed in the story of Bob Walters' life (the "point" of his story) is that a person can become a success if s/he tries to help others, thanks those who helped him/her, puts their faith in God, and does what s/he feels is right, even if others (such as one's family) don't agree or don't understand. A person should, in essence, do all they can

do, believe in what they do, and be humble about their actions and beliefs.

It is important to note that the narrative is structured in such a way as to highlight and call attention to this central "point". The narrative has a temporal form, that is, it gives directionality to events. The audience (and analyst) can observe the "shift" which occurs in the evaluative character of the events. Bob begins by being a "nobody", a person with problems, and ends by being a "somebody", a "success" who is doing things and believing things which are good, right, proper. Gergen and Gergen (1983) discuss narratives which utilize this temporal form, which they call "progressive" narratives. Progressive narratives create feelings of drama and emotion by setting up a contrastive relationship among events. They rely on a critical "change", a "turn of events" which shifts the direction of the evaluation from bad to good. The authors make an interesting point about the social "need" for progressive narratives. They note that the improved or enhanced quality of any action is assumed to be desired, and that, by telling and hearing progressive narratives, "people can see themselves, their world and their relations as possessing the potential for positive change" (p. 265). One might surmise that this need to share "progressive" stories accounts for the "powerfulness" of cultural myths.⁹

The purpose or function of this mythic narrative is to show how one becomes a successful person in this particular culture/society. Dr. Haller's goal for the event was to show

that they were successful in their jobs as teachers at Northeast High School. Yet an analysis of the specific content of the story reveals a more general statement about the preferred attributes or actions of a "somebody", that is, what a successful person says, does and believes.

This does not imply that Dr. Haller was incorrect when she ascribed his success to their influence; Bob Walters does specifically "thank them all" for what they have done for him, and he backs his words with a deed- the scholarship money. But his success story involves the use of other cultural resources and tools as well. Thus, this mythic narrative functions to present a dilemma and to show how a person solved it, by showing what actions, beliefs and attitudes he found to be the culturally preferred ways to become a "successful" person.

Within the content of the myth, the specific participants referred to are Bob Walters, Dr. Haller, Hy, Fran and Mrs. C. Each fulfills a distinct and specific role in this mythic "drama".¹⁰ Bob fills the role of the current "protagonist" in an eternal societal drama: the social actor trying to solve the problem of culturally successful personhood. Dr. Haller takes on the role of storyteller- she is the person, within the community, who is allowed the privilege of telling his story. He has written a letter to her, telling her about his situation and actions, and she has taken it upon herself to share his tale with others, specifically with those who she knows will appreciate and respond to his quest for success. It is important to note that it is Dr. Haller who provides the crucial opening to this

narrative- she sets up for her audience the prior events and background which make Bob's present actions seems (in contrast) so good and ennobling.

The other individuals play a supporting role in this drama. Hy is available to take over ("go on") for Dr. Haller if she "can't get through it" (lines 17-19). He is designated by Dr. Haller as the next person in line to take over her role as storyteller. One can assume from this that he is either closely acquainted with Bob and his story, or is in a position which is second in authority and status to Dr. Haller (or both); he therefore assumes the right, responsibility and privilege of taking her place as storyteller, if need be. Fran (who is presumed to be one of the teachers or counselors) plays the role of historian and supporter. She knows much about Bob's story, and is available to corroborate Dr. Haller's statements about Bob's prior status as a "nobody" ("Bob Walters, as Fran could tell you, if she could write his biography..."- lines 7-9).

Lastly, Mrs. C. (who is mentioned as being the cooking class instructor) has the role of being one of the teachers who should be thanked for helping to change Bob into what he has become. She provided him (and other young men) with a "change of learning" (line 43), with the result that they have "become good very fine cooks" (line 46). But she not only helped to change him into something "good" and "very fine", she also cares about him- she would "worry" over him, if she knew about his situation (line 74). But Dr. Haller feels that it is so important to share his story that she goes against his request not to "say anything"

to Mrs. C.; She not only tells this one individual who helped change him and who cares about him- she tells many such people. Thus, Mrs. C. can be seen as representing a class of people who fill the role of supportive and caring change-agents in Bob's life story.

As to the time and place referred to in the content of the narrative, Bob is on a ship, about to leave it by plane and go behind the DMZ. He is in a situation which is risky and potentially life-threatening, and has selected this moment to "state his case"- to tell what actions he has taken and is taking, and to tell the reasons and beliefs which compel this conduct. One can imagine this being a point in time at which an individual would want to stop and "tell his story", to leave a record of his life history, in case it is about to end. He does "pray" that he'll make it back, but acknowledges that it is all in "God's hands".

As to the fourth aspect, the evaluation of the content, there are several evaluative statements made by Bob Walters about his behavior. He hopes that he is "good enough" to become a Big Brother (line 40); He "does his best" and believes in what he does, "believes that what he does is right" (lines 63-65); He is "not worth" worrying over (lines 74-75). What these evaluative comments reveal is a humble response to a problematic situation, a note of hesitancy, an attitude of "maybe I could be of help". He feels that he is doing his best, giving his all, and feels that that is what should be done. He also strongly feels that he is doing what is right, to the point of "standing up to" his

family and their challenges ("They say I'm a real nut"; "...don't you value life? Are you crazy?"- lines 52-55). It is clear that he positively evaluates his own actions and beliefs, yet is not dogmatic or aggressive in the tone of these evaluations.

The analysis now turns to the evaluation which is made by the participants in the speech event. Dr. Haller, as storyteller, makes evaluative statements about Bob's actions and beliefs. Simply put, she has a positive attitude towards the story of his life, and how he presents himself as a person. At the beginning of her discourse, she sets up that what is to follow will be a "positive" tribute. This is done by stating that Bob "might" have been a nobody, but that a few teachers at the school made a great "difference" in his life. Dr. Haller closes by commenting, "when you get a letter like this, to me it means, that we are very successful at Northeast High School" (lines 86-89). Letters "like this" may be seen as a category of discourse which give positive attestation to the successfulness of certain former students. In this way, Dr. Haller is making an evaluative statement not just about Bob Walters, but about people like him, who do good, and in doing so, make the school look good.

Because of the norms of interaction for this type of speech event, there is little possibility to assess how the auditor's responded to the mythic narrative. There is Dr. Haller's statement, "and I think you will agree with me" (line 90), which expresses the belief that the audience shares her positive evaluation. But there are no actual verbal statements from

audience members which would provide support for her belief. Their nonverbal behavior reveals a general attentiveness, but there is no vigorous head-nodding, for example, no applause or standing ovation. Conversely, there is no overt negative response, no booing, walking out or head-shaking. It seems that, in this instance, signs of attentiveness and polite listening can be interpreted as agreement and positive assent.

The importance of including the storyteller's and audience's "evaluation" of the narrative has been previously discussed. A point to be made now is that this "evaluation" can be directly tied to how stories are accepted or rejected by cultural members. As Fisher (1987) has stated, people test the "probability" (coherence) and "fidelity" (truthfulness and reliability) of the stories that they hear. A story will be positively evaluated if it is judged to have coherence, to "hang together", and if it is judged to be based on social truths, to be based on "good reasons". In giving assent to the story of Bob Walters' life, in declaring him a "success", Dr. Haller (and her audience) are saying that his story has "passed the test" of narrative probability and fidelity. 11

Several of the key concepts which underlie the theory of "narrative rationality" are particularly insightful for this analysis. First, as has been noted, the story's structure follows a culturally powerful and plausible sequence; from bad to good, nobody to somebody, failure to success. In Fisher's terms, this story is judged to be "probable", because it has "structural coherence". Second, in showing approval of the story, the

storyteller and audience are asserting their approval of the values on which it is based. They are asserting that Bob's concept of himself, and that his behaviors, adhere to a cultural conception of what is "good". In Fisher's terms, the story is judged to have "fidelity", because it is based on a "logic of good reasons".

There is a third aspect of Fisher's "narrative rationality", which will be dealt with here in some detail. It involves a way to "test" a story through an analysis of other cultural data; more importantly (for the purposes of this paper), it provides a way to establish "external validity" of the analyst's interpretation of a mythic narrative. This "validity test" can be outlined as follows: Fisher states that one way the probability of a story can be assessed is by its "material" coherence; by comparing and contrasting it with stories which are told in other discourse. He further states that one way to assess the fidelity of a story is to check for consistency, to see if the values on which it is based are confirmed or validated in other "experiences", in the lives and statements of others, particularly those who are admired and respected. The next section of this paper will undertake such a "validity test"; it will compare the normative statements which have been revealed through the interpretation of this text with other discourse found in the same "cultural domain".

"Validity Test" of the Interpretation

This portion of the paper begins by summarizing what has been revealed about the norms of the culture through the analysis

of this mythic narrative. The interpretation shows that the story presents a cultural conception of what "good people" feel, believe and do; the preferred attributes and actions of cultural members. The central actor, Bob Walters, makes a succinct statement which expresses the preferred conduct "good persons": When one is faced with a problematic situation, one should do their best, and believe that what they do is right, because that is all they can do. In essence, one should be sincere, (the preferred "belief") and humble, (the preferred "attitude") and make the best effort possible (the preferred "action"). This effort involves both verbal actions, such as giving thanks and praying, and physical actions, including commitments of time (to be a Big Brother), money (the scholarship) and one's physical being (to the war effort).

As stated, the analyst can look to other discourse in the same "cultural domain", to find material which compares or contrasts with these statements; to see if they are confirmed or validated in other instances of discourse. In this case, the analyst would logically go back to the film High School, from which the text was taken. A review of the film reveals several episodes ("sequences") which contain discourse useful for this "validity test". Each episode will be briefly described, and then the pertinent material will be presented and discussed. (The episodes are arranged in the order they occur in the film).

The first episode occurs at the beginning of the film- a teacher is standing in front of his class, presenting the "Thought for the Day". There appears to be a ritual in the

school, where each day begins with the teachers giving announcements from the "Daily Bulletin" and giving the "Thought for the Day". The teacher sets up presentation of the "Thought" by saying that they (the students) might hear or see a "little notice somewhere" that they might think doesn't concern them, but it might "change your whole life". He then reads the "Thought": "Life is cause and effect, one creates his tomorrow at every moment by his motives, thoughts and deeds of today." He comments that it is a "question of cause and effect", because, again, they might read something that "might change your life."

His talk stresses the strong potentiality for change, which implicitly means change for the better. The "Thought" focuses on how this change can occur, how to create a "better" tomorrow. It is done by having ("at every moment") the right attributes ("motives" and "deeds") and the right actions ("deeds"). This discourse confirms the analyst's interpretation that the preferred conduct for "good/successful" persons includes a combination of beliefs, attitudes and actions.

In the second episode, the parents of a student are in a counselor's office, discussing with him the fact that their daughter is failing (or has failed) a course. Also present is the girl's teacher. The father is trying to get an explanation for how she could fail, and has brought with him several papers she did for the course, which have positive comments on them (such as "fabulous"). After some discussion between the father and the counselor, the counselor becomes adamant in his tone and states that she failed "because she failed in all these tests."

He goes on: "We can only judge on the basis of performance. You may have hidden talent in you, sir, but if you don't perform it, we don't know it." The father agrees, quietly saying, "True, true, okay." The counselor then repeats his main point, "the world will recognize you only by your performance," to which the father responds, in a louder voice, "That's true".

This discourse validates the analyst's finding of a cultural emphasis on deeds and actions. There are many potential "cultural resources and tools" which an individual can use to "prove" him/herself, but the ones which are preferable, because they can be "recognized" and "judged", are the ones that involve a "performance" which has some observable result. In this case, it is written examinations; In the case of Bob Walters, it is a scholarship fund, activities as a Big Brother, and activities as a soldier. One might say that, in writing his letter to Dr. Haller, he is providing a record of his "performances", on the basis of which he can be "judged" a success.

The next episode focuses on the norm of preferred "attitudes", the character or manner in which actions should be taken. The episode involves a discussion in a counselor's office between a student and a counselor. The student is in trouble because he got into an argument with a teacher, and was given a detention, which he refused to take. The counselor states that the student showed "poor judgment", and that he should have "showed some character". He repeats, "It's time you showed a little character."

As their discussions proceed, the counselor elaborates on how to show character, which, he says, is "a question of how do we follow the rules and regulations." In essence, in every situation, especially a problematic one, "there's an approach to it." The preferred "approach" for this case is that "...you don't fight with a teacher, ...you ask permission to talk and ask him to listen to you."

The counselor has articulated a normative statement as to the preferred way to conduct oneself. As noted in the previous episode, one's performance, actual behaviors and actions, are important, but equally important is how one behaves. The culturally preferred manner, as reflected in this discourse, is an attitude of humbleness, of respect and politeness (e.g. "asking permission"). This confirms the interpretation of Bob Walters' story, which revealed a similar conception of preferred "attitudes" towards actions. It was noted that Bob was praised for being humble in his manner, for not showing aggressiveness or dogmatism. The student is sanctioned (by the teacher and counselor) for displaying an aggressive tone, and is instructed that the correct way to act is by being polite and showing deference and humbleness.

There is a second "counseling" session in which the topic of discussion is the manner in which actions are taken. Like the previous scene, it involves a student who has gotten into trouble in class, and is called into the counselor's office. In this case, her mother has been called in too. The three of them go over the details of the event, and the girl admits that she was

disrespectful and talked back to the teacher. The mother says that this is "the one thing that bothers (her) so much", because "one of the worst offenses is being disrespectful to an older person, irregardless of what the condition may be." She goes on to point out that, "you can say the same thing in a pleasant manner that you can in an offensive way," and that it's not the language the girl uses which is wrong, but "it's the manner that a sentence is brought forth."

As in the previous scene, the speaker articulates a normative statement as to the preferred way to conduct oneself. Even under distressful or problematic circumstances ("irregardless of what the condition may be") the culturally preferred manner is an attitude of respect and deference, a "pleasant" manner, which is not "offensive". To repeat, this young student is punished for not conforming to this stated rule of conduct, while Bob Walters is rewarded for following this cultural norm.

Interestingly, this episode also contains discourse about culturally valued "beliefs". The counselor talks about the girl's potential for change, her ability to "move out of the circle (of bad friends) and into the straight". She says the girl has the requisite attributes (intelligence, maturity and background) to offer a "positive kind of leadership". The mother agrees that her daughter has a potential for change, saying that one of her attributes is a strong will, a "very set mind;...if she decides that something should be done, this is what she pursues." The mother then states that she has "often said" to

her daughter: "Use your determination for right, and as long as you do, you'll be all right."

This final statement compares favorably with the norms revealed in the mythic narrative. It validates the interpretation that, in this culture, one aspect of the preferred conduct of members is that they "believe" in what they are doing, and "believe" that what they do is right. The student is admonished to put her "will" and "determination" to good use, to a pursuit of what is "right". In the mythic narrative, the central actor did just this- he offered "positive" leadership by pursuing what he believed to be right (in his case, fighting in the war), even at the risk of ridicule from his family. One might say that he changed for the better, by moving out of his family's "circle" and into the "straight".

The next episode to be discussed involves several social actors previously introduced. In this scene, the mother and father of the girl who was failing (even though she wrote "fabulous" papers) are discussing her future with the same counselor. The daughter is also present. What is interesting about the dialogue in this particular episode is that the "story" it tells parallels, in many ways, the story of Bob Walters' life. The discussion revolves around the fact that her parents want her to go to college, but she wants to attend beauty school and be a cosmetician. At the end of their talk, the counselor firmly says to all of them,

"You can't undo the past, even if somebody has made a mistake, and been wrong, and unfair, you

can't undo the past. The only thing you can do is try to do better in the present, so that the future will be better. Now I'm suggesting to you (the student), work as hard as you can, do the best you can, ... and let's see what happens..."

It is assumed that he is referring to the incident of the "failing" grade when he talks about making mistakes and being wrong and unfair.

His central point is well stated. According to the conception of the world and events held by this cultural group, one can't "undo" the past- one can only do "better" now, to achieve a "better" future. As stated, the "story" being told in this discourse is similar in structure and content to the story told in the mythic narrative. Bob Walters could not "undo" his past- he could not undo the facts that he was "without parents", was "not a high academic student", was "most average or subaverage." He might have been a "nobody". But he escaped this bleak outlook by changing, by doing "better", and thus ensuring a better future not only for himself, but for the people he helped in his actions: the students who would benefit from the scholarship money; the young children who would benefit from his work as a Big Brother. If one wanted to sound particularly lofty and make Bob Walters look even more like a cultural "hero", it could be stated that he was ensuring a better future for the "free world" by fighting in the Vietnam War. To many members of his cultural group, it no doubtedly could be seen this way.

The last episode which will be included in this "validity test" is another "Thought for the Day". As with the other scene, it is read to a class by a teacher, as part of the morning ritual of reading from the "Bulletin". The "Thought" is as follows: "The dictionary is the only place where success comes before work."

To the analyst (and the contemporaneous audience of the message) this discourse contains a clear normative statement about the attributes of culturally successful people. Simply put, in this culture, one has to "work" to be a "success". It is not something innate, nor is it a quality which is ascribed or conferred at birth. One must acquire success. Other discourse found in this cultural domain has described the preferred ways to acquire success; the preferred actions, beliefs and attitudes. It has been shown that these other stories and statements give evidence of the "material" coherence and the "fidelity" of the analyst's interpretation of the mythic narrative.

It is not surprising to find discourse which validates the interpretation of this particular narrative. The story of any cultural member's life must be interwoven with the stories of many other lives. These stories are "cultural productions"; the actors and events, problems and solutions, are "meaningful" only in cultural terms, and are constrained by cultural codes of conduct. As MacIntyre (1981) states, "The story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity" (p. 205). Bob Walters has found his "moral identity", his sense of self, by finding and utilizing the

resources and tools which are valued by his culture. One way that he has learned what the preferred ways of acting and believing are is by listening to the talk of admired/respected members of the culture, such as teachers, counselors, and parents. He learned from their words and their deeds, and then went forward, in his own "quest" for "success".

Conclusion

This paper has shown that the narrative is a "culturally significant" speech genre, which can be analyzed to reveal important aspects of a culture's code, particularly it's expectations for conduct. The author has developed a systematic method for inferring norms through the interpretation of narratives, and this paper has shown the utility of the analytical framework, through its application to a specific cultural text. The result of such an analysis is a set of normative statements, which can be checked for consistency by comparison with other discourse in the cultural domain.

It is the belief of the author that this paper has identified a powerful analytical tool which can be used by the "student" of culture. By recognizing the "powerful" cultural material which is contained in the narrative form, and finding a way to look "behind the scenes" of the story, to reveal the salient relationships between actors, actions, attitudes and beliefs, this investigator has provided a way for others to audit "communal texts" and discover the norms which guide the conduct of community members.

As with all methods, the analytical framework developed in this paper needs to be put to further tests. Investigators should look to cultural stories which present solutions to problematic situations, and look to stories which receive strong evaluation from their narrators and audience. These are expected to be the best candidates for analysis, because they follow most closely the components of the "mythic narrative", as outlined in this paper. It is also crucial that the investigator conduct a "validity test", following the components in Fisher's theory of narrative probability and fidelity. This external assessment of the normative "candidates" revealed in the analysis may be conducted using nearly any form of cultural discourse. It would seem particularly useful to finding other "stories" to compare and contrast, especially stories about cultural members who are admired or respected.

This paper concludes with a quotation from MacIntyre (1981), who provides the inspiration for the title of this paper. He makes a clear and powerful statement about the importance of narratives when he says, "It is through hearing stories that children learn what the cast of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are. Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words" (p. 201). MacIntyre also makes a statement which this author believes should be taken to heart by all cultural analysts: "There is no way to give an understanding of any society, including our own,

except through the stock of stories which constitute its dramatic resources."

Notes

1. See Freilich (1975) for a different perspective on norms and myths. He states that the central purpose of myths is to resolve a dilemma: whether to be guided by "smart" norms or "proper" norms. Briefly, Freilich's argument is that smart norms are learned to survive physically, but we need proper ("cultural") norms to survive psychically; "properness gives the mind sanity, and smartness gives the mind a body to live in" (p. 209). He believes that the role of myths is to regularly and effectively transform the smart (that which seems to be effective, efficient and spatially useful) into the proper (that which becomes convention, a rule followed for its own sake).

2. Hymes (1981) presents an excellent example of how the analyst can collect a series of myths and interpret them to find a culture's "storehouse of supra-individual type solutions". He found that Clackamas Chinook myths revolved around the opposition between maintenance of formal expectations, general social roles, and proprieties, on the one hand; and the heeding of or appropriate respond to information about a particular empirical situation, on the other. The myths expressed each of the possible combinations of these elements (uphold/violate social norms; give adequate/inadequate response to empirical situation), and showed the consequences of implementing each of these possible "solutions" to societal problems. [In Hymes (1975), these terms are used to interpret a Kathlamet Chinook myth].

3. Bauman credits Jakobson (1971) with the origination of these concepts. He also quotes from Bakhtin (1981, p. 255), who uses these terms: "Before us are two events- the event that is narrated in the work and the event of narration itself..." (p. 112).

4. This concept of "evaluation" comes from Labov & Waletzky (1967).

5. Wiseman's documentaries about American institutions include: Titticut Pollies (1967) about a prison for the criminally insane; Law and Order (1969); Hospital (1971); Basic Training (1971); Juvenile Court (1973); Primate (1973); Welfare (1975); Meat (1976); Canal Zone (1977); and Sinai Field Mission (1978). According to Benson (1980), Wiseman is "one of the most productive and consistently successful documentary filmmakers in the history of the medium." (p. 233).

6. For other discussions about Frederick Wiseman and the film High School, see: Atkins (1974); Halberstadt (1976); Namber (1970, 1974); McWilliams (1970); Nichols (1978); Rosenthal (1971); and Swartz (1972-73).

7. According to Gronbeck (1978).

8. As noted, both Benson and Gronbeck focus on the rhetorical aspect of Wiseman's choice of sequencing. Benson succinctly states the "argument" which Wiseman makes in the film as follows: "The beginning and ending of the film show the school as a factory turning out a product...The middle of the film explores how the factory processes its students into willing members of the social order". (1980, p. 236) Both authors

include a detailed discussion about Wiseman's "rhetorical" choice to end the film with the school principal's speech.

9. An additional argument for the cultural "powerfulness" of progressive narratives can be seen in Dundes (1963). He found that the "progressive" narrative structure was one of the most basic and pervasive way in which folktales were organized. He calls this structure "Lack and Lack Liquidated", where the events/actions move from disequilibrium to equilibrium. The narrative begins in a state of disequilibrium, a state of lack, which is to be feared and avoided if possible. The narrative then relates how the lack was liquidated, how something "lost" or absent was found.

10. An interesting aside on the topic of "participants": Gergen and Gergen (1983) make the point that the incidents woven into a narrative are not only the actions of the single individual, but interactions with others. They say that narrative constructions typically require a "supporting cast", and that an actor's success in sustaining any given narrative is fundamentally dependent on others' willingness to play out certain parts in relation to the actor.

11. See Cutbirth (1986) for an interesting application of Fisher's theory of "narrative rationality" to the Custer myth.

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- 49
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